

Therapeutic Envoy

Frederick Ernest Nolting Jr.

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Spirits are noticeably higher in Washington about the fate of Southeast Asia, especially the still precarious struggle for South Vietnam.

One reason for the lift is what someone today described as the country-doctor manner of Fritz Nolting: gentle but

Man in the News
firm, a bit of old Virginia mixed with board colloquialisms, lyrical and hard-head-

ed—just about what you would expect of a brilliant philosophy student and a member of a musical, old-line Richmond family, catapulted by a world war into Washington's foreign-policy machine and suddenly hoisted by the New Frontier from a calm post in Paris into the ambassadorship to Vietnam.

Ambassador Frederick Ernest Nolting Jr. has been applying that manner since May, and in fluent French, to President Ngo Dinh Diem, the stubborn, hard-working leader of South Vietnam's fight against Soviet-supplied Communist guerrillas. This week he has been exercising it in a sotto-basso voice with President Kennedy and other Administration officials.

He has compared himself to the country doctor when the war talk gets too grim. All week long he has been telling the one about the old country doctor who, when he didn't know a patient's affliction, always chose to throw him into fits because "I'm hell on fits."

A Patient Explainer

Actually, of course, the Ambassador has done quite the opposite. When President Ngo Dinh Diem's associates went into fits over what they thought was excessive United States pressure to reform their Government, their economy and their war, Mr. Nolting spent long, patient hours explaining that Washington wanted for them only what they wanted for themselves.

His first pleas everywhere in Washington have been against fits of temper over the besieged Vietnamese. These are good but troubled people, he says in effect. They are proud of their country and don't want to leave the Communists with a monopoly on Vietnamese nationalism. Sniping from Washington, he suggests, will not kill one additional guerrilla for them.

That, associates here say, is typical of the Ambassador's steady performance in Saigon. Tall and robust he has fulfilled as a diplomat of 50 the promise that friends a generation ago saw in a youth known for his almost cherubic good looks while accumulating scholastic honors in philosophy.

Mr. Nolting was born on Aug. 24, 1911, into a leading Richmond family that was to lose most of its money in the crash of 1929. He has a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of



Associated Press

A firm but soothing hand

degree in 1933 and a master's degree in 1934.

For five years he worked at his father's calling as an investment broker in Richmond. Then he went back to school to earn a master's degree at Harvard in 1941 and a Ph.D. at Virginia in 1942. He lectured on philosophy at his alma mater, but the war intervened. As a Navy lieutenant he served as a gunnery officer. He was discharged as a lieutenant commander in 1946.

Aided Atlantic Alliance

In the State Department, he specialized in the affairs of various European countries while the Atlantic Alliance was being forged. In 1955 he became a political officer at the Paris Embassy and was deputy United States representative in the North Atlantic Council when the New Frontier beckoned last spring.

By all accounts, Ambassador Nolting quickly developed close relations with President Ngo Dinh Diem. Vietnam's war-beset countryside, he keeps reminding Americans, is nothing like the decorator-perfect residence evolved in Saigon by his wife, the former Olivia Lindsay Crumpler of Danville, Va.

There is not much time for relaxation. Besides delicate diplomacy and grueling war, there are the constant visitors—300 officials since September 1.

The Noltings try to relax at the piano, a talent the Ambassador has passed to his four daughters. The oldest, Molly and Lindsay, are at Wellesley College; Frances and Jane attend a French school in Saigon.

Of all Mr. Nolting's traits, his associates emphasize his courage. His life and family are threatened in writing almost every week, but he shrugs off the threats. Last July, when a grenade was thrown on the bumper of his car, his first instinct was to shield his children. Fortunately, the missile did not explode.

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